



# NOAA FY 2001 Budget Request Fact Sheet

## LANDS LEGACY INITIATIVE

OUR SEAS AND OUR SKIES



### Coral Reef Conservation - \$9.0 Million Increase

NOAA requests \$15 million in FY 2001, an increase of \$9 million, to better protect and conserve the nation's coral reef ecosystems through focused research, restoration, monitoring, development of marine protected areas, and sound fisheries management. Coral reefs are among the most diverse and biologically productive ecosystems on earth, yet continue to decline at an alarming rate. NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation request is a key component of the Administration's FY 2001 Lands Legacy Initiative. Funds in FY 2001 will strengthen current conservation efforts, ensuring that U.S. coral reefs continue to provide valuable resources and services to future generations. These funds will implement NOAA's responsibilities under the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.

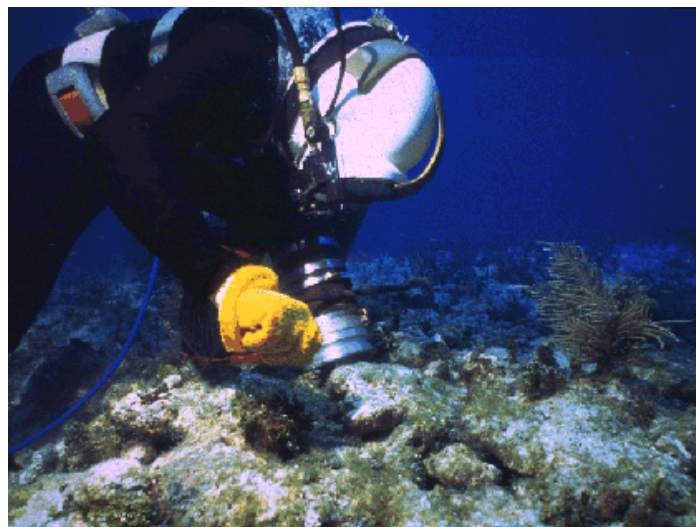
Despite their importance, the health of the nation's coral reefs are declining. Reduced fish catches, increases in the frequency and severity of coral diseases, elevated levels of nutrients and contaminants in coastal waters, and drastic changes in the population structures of certain reefs all reflect the negative impacts of human activity. Without aggressive conservation measures, coral reef decline will continue, leading to severe natural and economic losses.

#### Responding to the Challenge

Our challenge is to balance the need for a growing economy with the need to protect and manage coral reef ecosystems. In June 1998, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13089 on Coral Reef Protection. The order formed the U.S. Coral Reef Task

#### NOAA Budget: Lands Legacy (New Funding Request)

	FY 2001 Change \$ millions
<b>National Ocean Service</b>	
<b>Ocean Resource Conservation and Assessment</b>	
(Coral Reef Conservation)	\$4.0
<b>Ocean and Coastal Management</b>	
(Coastal Zone Management Act Program)	\$94.8
(Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control)	\$2.0
(National Estuarine Research Reserve System)	\$6.0
(National Marine Sanctuaries)	\$10.0
<b>National Marine Fisheries Service</b>	
<b>Conservation and Management Operations</b>	
(Coral Reef Protection)	\$5.0
<b>Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction Account</b>	
(National Estuarine Research Reserve System)	\$2.0
<b>Other Accounts</b>	
(Coastal Impact Assistance Fund)	\$100.0
(Pacific Salmon Fund)	\$42.0
<b>Lands Legacy Total New Funding</b>	<b>\$265.8</b>



Removal of reef rubble at the M/V Elpis grounding site in the Florida Keys.

#### Why Coral Reef Conservation is Important

Coral reefs in the United States, in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, are among the most biologically productive and complex ecosystems in the world. They are home to over 25 percent of all marine life and support about 4,000 fish species. This incredible diversity sustains tourism and fishing industries that are responsible for billions of dollars in economic activity.

Force, which developed a detailed National Action Plan to provide for the long-term conservation of coral reef ecosystems. In order for this plan to become a reality, NOAA needs increased funding and local, national, and international agencies and organizations must work together to protect our coral reef resources.

NOAA is committed to implementing key actions identified in the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs. In FY 2000, NOAA began a suite of activities to map, monitor and effectively manage these threatened ecosystems. With new funding in FY 2001, NOAA, and our partners at the local, state, and island

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level, will continue these efforts, and strengthen the research and restoration aspects of coral conservation measures, improve the use of marine protected areas, and utilize reef protection as a fisheries management tool.

*Understanding the Problem.* Coral reef research is necessary to answer critical questions about coral reef decline. NOAA will initiate and expand research that will provide the new information, tools, and technology that managers need to address problems at the local level. NOAA will partner with other federal programs, the academic community, and local governments to assess the causes of reef degradation and provide management strategies to reverse or mitigate further decline. This approach will address critical issues including loss of coral cover, impacts of fishing, changes in resource use, the effects of climate change, and diseases that are harming many reefs.

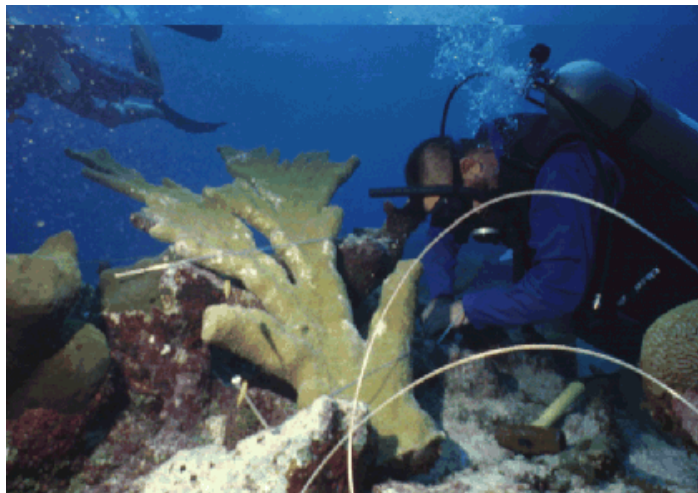
*Reducing Human Impacts.* NOAA will also take actions to reverse human impacts by implementing coral restoration projects at small and medium vessel grounding sites. Restoration efforts that accelerate the recovery of injured coral are an important tool for coastal managers due to the slow growth rates of many coral species. This initiative will support coral reef restoration projects by providing tools, techniques, and regional restoration plans. Activities will be focused on existing protected areas in Florida, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, Guam, Am. Samoa, and other territories. NOAA will also concentrate on prevention of vessel groundings and other marine transportation-related events that injure coral ecosystems.

*Marine Protected Areas.* As human-induced and natural pressures on coral reefs continue, it is important that valuable coral reef habitat be protected for future generations. NOAA, in partnership with other Federal and state agencies, will help build a national network of marine protected areas. NOAA will help strengthen the management of existing protected sites and help create new coral reef protected areas through technical assistance provided directly to state and island jurisdictions.

*Fisheries Management.* Fishing is one of the most common human impacts on our nation's coral reefs. New funding will provide management tools to the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Regional Fishery Management Councils to utilize fishery reserves to protect coral reefs and resident fish species. Through identification of essential fish habitat and an assessment of fishing impacts on coral reefs, managers will be better able to mitigate the effects of fishing and conserve important reef fish spawning and nursery grounds. In addition, NOAA will better assess, monitor, restore, and protect Pacific reefs by removing some of the estimated 6,000 tons of debris that plague the reefs surrounding the Hawaiian Islands.

### Why NOAA?

NOAA has primary Federal responsibility for the stewardship of marine resources, including coral reefs. NOAA is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities by protecting coral reefs through



*Elkhorn coral reattachment at the Fortuna Reefer grounding site off Mona Island, Puerto Rico.*

management actions, monitoring coral reef health, and restoring injured reefs. NOAA has the institutional capacity and experience to strengthen the Nation's research, restoration, and protection capabilities and transfer the knowledge gained to coral reef managers around the world.

NOAA's FY 2000 Activities include:

- Developing digital coral reef habitat maps for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the 8 main Hawaiian Islands.
- Developing a National Program to inventory, monitor, and assess U.S. Coral reef ecosystems.
- Establishing reef monitoring projects in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean.
- Awarding grants to U.S. states and territories to support the local development of coral conservation projects.
- Conducting a national "gap analysis" of marine protected areas and promoting an international and national network of MPAs.
- Monitoring existing fisheries reserves
- Helping Fishery Management Councils develop and implement coral reef ecosystem plans and fishery reserves.
- Providing training and tools to improve local capacity to prepare for and respond to oil and chemical spills threatening coral environments.

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